**Worship Service – November 22, 2020**

**Liturgy including Sermon Manuscript**

 **Call to Worship**

We gather to celebrate and joyfully sing to our God!
Together, let us share our praises and thankfulness.
Come, let us enter into this sacred space with praise.
You O God, are the Holy God always and forever!
You are the Eternal One from whom all things come.
Come, let us enter into this sacred space with thanks.
O God, we are your children, created by and with your love.
Come, let us enter into this sacred space with joy and delight.

Amen.

**Opening Prayer**

At the beginning of the day

we seek your countenance among us, O God,

in the countless forms of creation all around us

in the sun’s rising glory

 in the face of friend and stranger.

Your presence within every presence

your Light within all light

your heart at the heart of this moment.

May the fresh light of morning wash our sight

 that we may see your Life

in every life this day.

**Amen.**

**Scripture: Psalm 100 (NRSV)**

**1**Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.
**2**    Worship the Lord with gladness;
    come into his presence with singing.

**3**Know that the Lord is God.
    It is he that made us, and we are his;[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%20100&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-15512a)]
    we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

**4**Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
    and his courts with praise.
    Give thanks to him, bless his name.

**5**For the Lord is good;
    his steadfast love endures forever,
    and his faithfulness to all generations.

One: May we hear the still speaking God in these words

**All: God is still speaking**

**Sermon**

Our text this morning is the 100th Psalm. As you turn there, I want to encourage you that whether you are anticipating a week filled with feasting or whether it is shaping up to be much more low-key, I hope that this Psalm can offer you some cause for gratitude and praise.

We all know that the links between worship and music run deep. It’s one of the aspects of church life that we miss so much during COVID. The ancient psalmists remind the community to praise God with song, shouts, musical instruments, raised hands, loud voices, dance, twirling, and in silence. Worship throughout the ages affirms this **integral connection between God and humanity.**

In Psalm 100, the composer uses **seven** different verbs to call to the community to worship: make, worship, come, know, enter, give thanks, *and* bless.

But, what does all of this look like today, during the dual pandemics of coronavirus and racism? What does it look like to “make a joyful noise” (v.1) in a country divided? Or, to “worship the LORD with gladness” (v.2) or “come into God’s presence” (v.3) on the Sunday before Thanksgiving when we will not gather as hoped…as families or churches? When we cannot sing together? How do we “enter God’s gates with thanksgiving…and praise?” (v.4)

A *Psalm of Thanksgiving* in these times? Well, yes – I think we need exactly this kind of Psalm, and this Psalm specifically exactly at these times – now more than ever we need to find gratitude and opportunities for joy.

Psalm 100 is unusual, as Psalms go, because it has a series of triplets. Mostly psalms have 2 thoughts per verse – and often the second thought is an echo of the first.

So, *verse one & 2* have three **ways to** praise God and

*verse three* has three **reasons why to** praise God.

Then *verse four* gives three **calls to come** to the temple and

*verse five* gives three **reasons why** **to** come.

OK – that’s enough math! Let’s look at those verses

*Verse 1 & 2*

**1**Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

**2**Worship the Lord with gladness;
     Come into God’s presence with singing.

You can almost hear the outbreak of jubilation described in this summons to praise in these opening verses. This psalm, which is the last of a group of what are known as Enthronement or Kingship Psalms (93, and 95-99), celebrating The Great I AM/YHWH as LORD over All. And here we hear calls to the entire community to lift praises to God, coming to worship with joy – to shout for joy, to worship gladly, to bring joyful songs.

The sound of joy that arises from deep within cannot be stifled, it is a creative act. We are to **make**a joyful noise. This is the sound that conveys the wonder of simply being alive. It is the heart of what it means to worship YHWH, the one that have created you, has formed you and given you purpose. To worship The Great I AM is to worship with joy at how, this Creator has sought connection and relationship with creation. To worship YHWH is to understand this integral connection between what is divine and what is human.Understanding that to be in covenant with The LORD Almighty, is reason enough to rejoice.

Affirming this sense of joy, the psalmist continues, telling those assembled to **worship** God,in Hebrew this verb has also mean ‘serve,’ and we are to do so with gladness. This is the gladness that breaks forth *fully aware* of the realities of life. It is not a deluded or delusion euphoria.

This is the gladness that enables you and me to **come** into God’s presence with a voice raised to sing praises to our Creator. To understand your very existence, every part of your life, whether you spend most of it in front of a screen these days, or on the phone, or feeling lonely and frustrated, frightened and fed up. Coming into God’s presence, is less of an invitation here, and more of an imperative! To become aware of God’s presence wherever you are, and however you feel.

This threefold call to praise (make, worship and come) is followed by an explanation of **the reason** behind this outburst of praise. The community is to give praise to God simply because God exists, simply because God is. With this statement, the psalmist acknowledges that life begins with God. God created us. God is to be worshipped because God is the Creator who calls humanity into covenant. In other words, God is to be worshipped for who God is, not just for what God has done.

*Verse 3*

Know that the LORD is God.

It is God who made us, and we are God’s.

We are God’ people, the sheep of God’s pasture.

**The why** of this joy comes from knowing that God is God (and we are not,) that God made us and that we together belong to God. You may notice that ‘LORD’ here is spelled in all caps. That signifies the personal name of God in Hebrew (compared to the title Lord/Adonai when small letters are used). This is the God of Moses, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Joshua and Deborah (who we heard about last week), of Naomi and Ruth, of David and Solomon, Elijah, Isaiah, and Daniel. LORD, all caps is our God, the Breath of Life, The Great I AM.

*Verse 4*

Enter God’s gates with thanksgiving

and God’s courts with praise;

give thanks to God and bless God’s name.

We are back to worship – except this time the call to worship is about the physical movement, to **enter**into the temple. And we also get a repeated a call to be thankful and to give praise. **Thanks** for what God has done and praise for who God is. To **bless** God’s name, I think, goes even further, to live in such a way that your very life honors who God is and what God values and is transforming us into.

You see…

Thanks is saying “Those flowers God made are beautiful,”

Praise is saying “How creative God is to have made them,”

 and to bless the name of the Creator, is to live in such a way

that allows flowers and animals to flourish.

Thanks is saying “Thank you for this food we are about to receive,”

Praise is saying “How amazing God is to have made life-giving provisions for us,”

and to bless the name of our Provider, is to live in a such way

provides for all humans (no matter where they live), so that they have

access to affordable and nutritious food & water for themselves and their families.

Thanks is saying, “My friends and family are gifts from God,”

Praise is saying, “How beautiful is God who desires community & relationship with us,”

 and to bless the name of the Creator, is to live in a way

 that builds connection with others, particularly those others push to the side.

Thanks is saying, “I am gratitude to be healthy at this time,”

Praise is saying, “How compassionate and merciful God is towards human

suffering/sickness,”

and to bless the name of the Healer is to live in such a way

prioritizes those who suffering illness, medical related debt,

and helps those who a scared of not being able to care for loved ones

when they are aging.

Neither **thanksgiving** nor **praise** or **blessing** God’s name are changed because of the circumstances we are in now – in fact it is precisely the right time to re-engage in ‘giving thanks’ and ‘praising God.’ It is precisely the right time to bless the name of God by re-committing to all that contributes to human flourishing, as all as the dismantling of all that contributes to human suffering.

The praise that is being invoked in this Psalm *is a* Praise of Participation, there are no spectators here. Everyone is to be engaged in the particulars of praising the LORD.

And just like in verse 3 when we were given the first reason for worshiping God. The **second reason for praise** is given in verse 5. God is to be worshipped because of God’s goodness, steadfast love, and faithfulness to all generations. In other words, God is to be worshipped not just for what God has done, but for what God **will do** for humanity in the future.

*Verse 5*

For the LORD is good

and his steadfast love endures forever;

his faithfulness to all generations.

So, Psalm 100 invites us into joy as we bring ourselves into God’s presence. It invites us to remember and appreciate God. Maybe it is a Psalm you can say when you are not feeling joyful, when COVID, or something else, is getting you down this Thanksgiving week.

Maybe it can remind you that our collective joy is rooted in God –

in who God is,

in what God has done, and

in what God continues to do through you and me,

and through the church even when we are a part.

 Amen.

**Benediction**

ONE: We began our service with thanksgiving.

We end now, moving out into the world with thanksgiving.

**ALL: O give thanks to our God who is so good,**

**whose love stands firm forever.**

ONE: Let thanksgiving enhance the joys you experience,

let thanksgiving transcend the pains you may suffer,

let thanksgiving sweeten the duties you must perform,

let thanksgiving underpin even the griefs you may have to endure.

**ALL: O give thanks to our God who is so good,**

**whose love stands firm forever.**

ONE: The love of the Creator,

 The power of the Christ, and

the fellowship of the Counsellor,

will be with you now and always. **Amen!**